

Coverdell Progress Report

The report summarizes the activities of the Drug Analysis Laboratory at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health related to the Coverdell Forensic Sciences Improvement Grant for the time period July 1 – December 31, 2011.

During this reporting period, the newly trained chemist Hevis Lleshi began independent case work. She analyzed 799 samples contained in 614 cases during the six month period with the objective of reducing testing turnaround time and decreasing the sample backlog. Despite her diligence the laboratory was unable to meet testing demand and there was an increase of 12 days in the time from when a sample was submitted to the laboratory and the reporting of results to law enforcement (81 days at the beginning of the grant period versus 93 at the end of the reporting period). There was a corresponding increase of the number of cases in backlog (6523 at the end of the reporting period as compared to 2009 at the beginning on the grant period). Several factors contributed to the decreased productivity: increased court testimony as the result of the *Meledez-Diaz v. Massachusetts* Supreme Court decision, laboratory renovation, retirement of a non-Coverdell chemist whose position is still vacant and writing and updating of laboratory standard operating procedures and laboratory policies by a non-Coverdell funded chemist.

ChemStation Chromatography software was purchased from Agilent to upgrade instrumental ability to acquire and manage analytical data related to forensic drug analysis.

No additional forensic training occurred in this reporting period.